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Lobbyists connect at Legislature

Oregon - Knowing whom to talk to is Alan Tresidder's specialty in getting the job done

Tuesday, June 05, 2007

JANIE HAR

SALEM –

A lan Tresidder wraps up his pitch to Rep. Linda Flores outside the House floor. As she walks back inside, he gives his assistant a thumbs up.

The Clackamas Republican will vote yes on a bill to require fluoridated drinking water – something dentists have hired Tresidder and his band of lobbyists to push. Margi Hoffman, who's been trying to corner Flores on the bill, gives a happy yelp and hugs him.

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"This is why he's the godfather," says Hoffman, Tresidder's assistant.

Tresidder is 62 years old, a Vietnam veteran, recovering alcoholic and father of three, ages 5 to 32. He's also one of the most well-connected lobbyists at the Capitol.

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Breaking News
- Target loses $1 million suit 11:29 a.m. PT
- Area loses 100th military member in Iraq and Afghanistan 11:00 a.m. PT
- Truck into Columbia River near I-205 10:53 a.m. PT
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Politics
- Water fight brewing in Salem 11:46 a.m. PT
- Governor signs bills to cap interest on payday loans 11:09 a.m. PT
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TODAY'S PHOTOS

With a staff of three, he handles nearly two dozen clients, including Verizon, the American Lung Association, private colleges and the deep-pocketed Oregon Trial Lawyers Association.

He carries no briefcase, handles no files: "I don't need stuff. If you can't have conversations with people, you can't have them."

Instead, Tresidder relaxes outside hearing rooms or strolls hallways, gleaning the latest from legislators, staff and other lobbyists.

He grabs a cup of coffee from the Capitol cafe and slides into a vinyl banquette. Sen. Ben Westlund swings by.

"The new and improved version should be coming," says the Bend Democrat.

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Benjamin Brink / The Oregonian

Jackie Meagher, member of Portland Aquatic Club, gets ready as today was opening day for Portland Parks and Recreation outdoor pools.

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FORUMS

Oregon Forum

- How do illegals pay... *by resistol 06/19/2007 11:50 a.m. PT*
- Poorly constructed Straw... *by luckieme 06/19/2007 12:07 p.m. PT*
- I agree. *by Qwetz 06/19/2007 12:18 p.m. PT*

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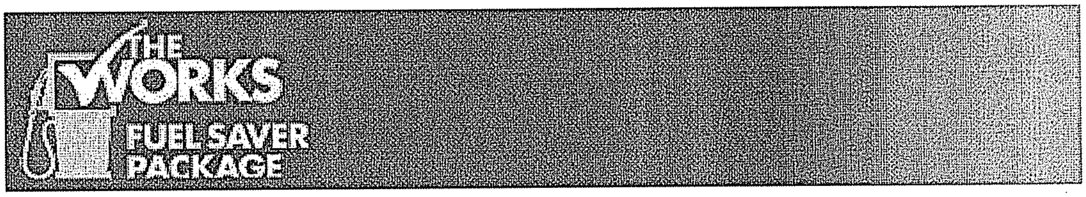

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• Computer glitch in Chicago causes nationwide delays for United flights 9:31 a.m. PT
• Vatican issues new commandments, this time for hitting the road 6:22 a.m. PT
• More Entries

Politics
• Governor endorses training police on mental illness 1:03 p.m. PT
• A Measure 37 'Bridge' to November 12:30 p.m. PT
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TODAY'S PHOTOS

Lobbyists connect at Legislature

Tresidder explains that Westlund has a bill to revamp the state health care system, but it contained a clause trial lawyers didn't like. So, "I gave him an amendment," Tresidder says.

He looks the part of someone who trades in advice and arguments: designer Italian Zegna gray suit from Mario's, a pair of Amy Sacks reading glasses and $995 Bontoni dress shoes. Nice clothing is his remaining vice, he says, having given up scotch and Marlboros years ago.

He won't disclose what he makes, saying only that he charges a monthly retainer for a two-year contract. Rates vary from $1,500 to $8,000 a month, because "time is what I sell."

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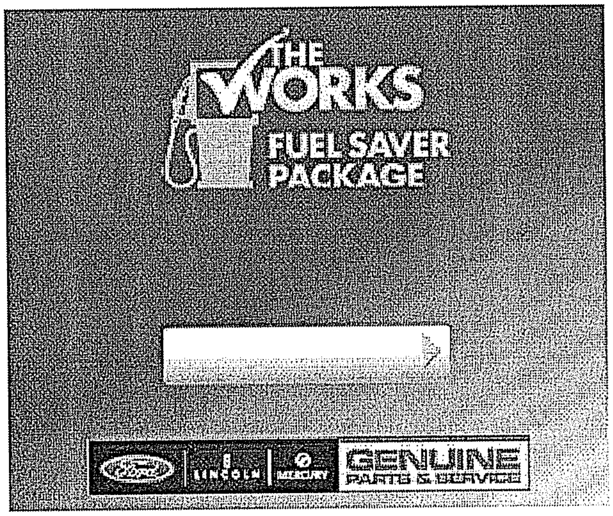

Tresidder slips out a Cartier pen from his suit pocket and scribbles a note to Salem Republican Rep. Vicki Berger. He wants her support for a bill that would give people more time to sue companies for selling defective products. Trial lawyers love the bill. Businesses hate it – they call it the "Lawsuit Promotion Act of 2007."

Berger won't budge.

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Brent Wojahn / The Oregonian
A squirrel snacks on a discarded apple core it found under a bush and carried up a tree for a bite Tuesday morning in SE Portland.
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"Corporations said their insurance could be affected. And I believe them," she says. "Sorry."

"That's OK," he says with a smile. "I'll follow up with you."

Tresidder tries again, this time with Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford.

"I'll be honest with you," Esquivel says. "Every time trial lawyers want a bill, I become suspicious."

Tresidder knew it would be tough.

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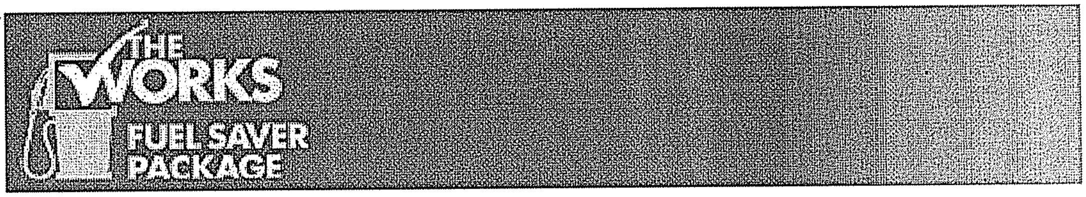

Lobbyists connect at Legislature

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He spots Susan Grabe, an Oregon State Bar lobbyist. She says debt collectors are floating a plan to divert money dedicated to legal help for poor people.

"Kate can reason with them," Tresidder says.

As in Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown. He championed the Portland Democrat when she first ran for the Legislature in 1990. They've been tight ever since.

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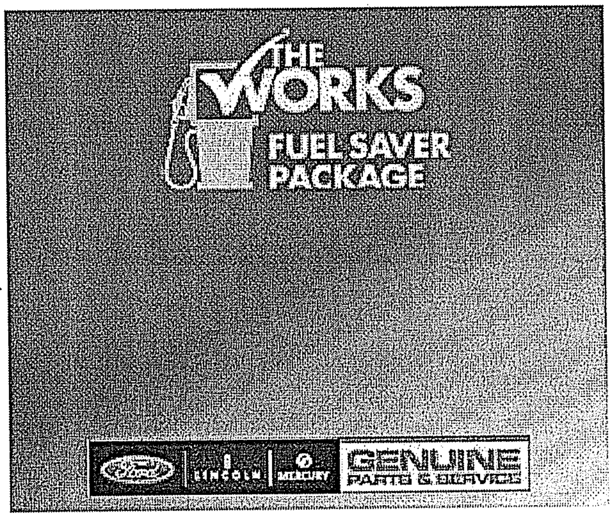

He flags her.

"Have you talked to (lobbyists Jim and Matt) Markee about their goofy plan to put Legal Aid money into the general fund?" he says.

Brown shakes her head; she hadn't heard.

Says Tresidder: "I think it might be a good time to have one of your personable, come-into-my-office" conversations.

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She smiles. "I'll do what I can."

"Thank you, darling," he says.

Not that he always wins. With only weeks to go in the session, the fluoride bill remains stuck in committee. Tresidder swears it's still alive.

The beauty of this place, he says, "is that nothing is dead until the gavel is dropped."

Janie Har: 503-221-8213; janiehar@news.oregonian.com

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Brent Wojahn / The Oregonian

A squirrel snacks on a discarded apple core it found under a bush and carried up a tree for a bite Tuesday morning in SE Portland.

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